Plymouth community calls for end to sheriff's agreement with ICE

By Katie Muchnick Globe Correspondent, Updated December 13, 2025, 2 hours ago

Pam Kiessling holds a sign during a protest at the entrance of the Plymouth County Correctional Facility (PCCF) in Plymouth, MA on December 13, 2025. Kiessling said The rally was organized by Indivisible Plymouth, UU Mass Action, Cape Cod Women for Change and others, to protest Plymouth County's agreement with United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Demonstrators gathered down the street from Plymouth County Correctional Facility — the lone remaining ICE detention facility in Massachusetts — to call for an end to the Plymouth sheriff's office agreement with United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"What is happening inside this facility is a violation of human rights and our Constitution," said Craig Swallow, one of the protest's speakers. "This is not public safety. This is state-sponsored cruelty and it's happening on our watch."

The Plymouth sheriff's office last year extended its contract with ICE, which pays the sheriff's office $215 per detainee per day to hold individuals facing deportation in part of the correctional facility. Detainees have accused the facility of civil rights violations and poor conditions, including allegedly limiting access to outside counsel and excessive use of solitary confinement.

The crowd of over 150, braving Saturday's frigid weather, garnered a steady stream of supportive honks from passing traffic. Handmade signs — from "I like my ICE crushed" to "ICE = kidnapping" — waved in the cold air.

Speakers highlighted the town's connection to America's immigrant founding as part of their motivation.

"Our Plymouth County Sheriff Joe McDonald is working with ICE and actually making the people less safe," said Heidi Mayo, 73, a leader of Indivisible Plymouth, one of the organizing groups for the protest.

Increased ICE operations in Plymouth have sparked fear and upheaval for immigrant neighborhoods, Mayo said. One Brazilian immigrant was detained in the middle of an intersection, frightening a school bus of children who watched the interaction.

"It just caused huge amounts of fear in the kids and in all of the immigrants," Mayo said, bemoaning a "lack of due process" for detainees.

A group of protesters linked chains together with signs about the reported conditions inside Plymouth County Correctional Facility and other ICE detention centers. Listeners chanted "not in our name" in response to details about limits to video calls, spoiled food, and lack of clean clothes.

Eva Das of Hull helps carry a "Peace Chain" across Long Pond Road during a protest at entrance to the Plymouth County Correctional Facility (PCCF) in Plymouth, MA on December 13, 2025. Das said she immigrated to the States from Hungary with her family in 1946. Now a citizen, she said she knows she's privileged, "because I don't look like the immigrants they're trying to pickup." The rally was organized by Indivisible Plymouth, UU Mass Action, Cape Cod Women for Change and others, to protest Plymouth County's agreement with United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

"We just feel very strongly that people should not be picked off the street because of the color of their skin," said Emerson Constant, who was protesting with family members. "It's really disappointing to see that we live in a country where no one seems to have a problem with that."

Constant, 18, said the existence of an ICE detention facility in Plymouth was "shameful."

"We can find a way to make the immigration issue in America work and work well and still treat people like human beings, Constant said. "We do not need a secret police that works for the government."

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